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INFO RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS PRIORITY

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SUBJECT: ATTENDANCE AT INAUGURATION OF PEPE LOBO

Classified By: Ambassador Hugo Llorens for reasons 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Planning has begun for the January 27 inauguration of president-elect Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo. Lobo has called for the inauguration ceremony to have a Honduran flavor. The Honduran public does not expect that large numbers of high-level foreign dignitaries will attend Lobo's inauguration in the aftermath of the June 28 coup d'etat. Most nations have not announced if they will send delegations from capitals. Only the Presidents of Panama and Taiwan have said they will attend. Colombia will send a delegation, but has not announced who will head it. End Summary.

¶2. (U) The committee that will plan the January 27 inauguration of president-elect Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo held its first meeting on January 6. Lobo will take the oath of office, administered by the President of the National Congress, at the national stadium, which has been used as a venue for inaugural ceremonies in the past. Lobo has said the ceremony should have a Honduran flavor, featuring Honduran performers. Lobo has stated that his government will be an austere one given the financial difficulties facing the nation and the ceremony is expected to reflect this.

¶3. (U) The number and level of foreign delegations in attendance at Lobo's inauguration remains unclear. President Ricardo Martinelli of Panama announced on January 6 that he would attend the inauguration. The Taiwanese presidential spokesman announced on January 4 that President Ma Ying-jeou would attend. Colombian Vice President Francisco Santos visited Honduras on January 12 and met with Lobo and Honduran businessmen. According to press reports, Santos said the Colombian government would provide assistance to the Lobo government as soon as it takes office. The press also reported that Santos said Colombia would send a delegation to the inauguration, but that it is not yet known if President Alvaro Uribe will lead it.

¶4. (U) The Government of Guatemala announced on January 5 that it would not send a delegation. Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Moratinos stated on January 11 that the conditions do not exist in Honduras that would allow the heir to the throne, the Prince of Asturias, to attend the inauguration. (Note: The Prince of Asturias usually leads Spanish delegations to Latin American presidential inaugurations. End Note.)

¶5. (C) The United States took over the rotating Chairmanship of the G-16 donors group on January 1 and the Ambassador

chaired a meeting of the G-16 on January 12. At that meeting, the Canadian representative stated that Canada would send a delegation, but that its level had not yet been decided. Other members said their countries were still undecided on whether to send a delegation and, if they did send one, at what level to do so. At a reception hosted by the Ambassador the evening of January 12 in honor of the G-16, the European Union Charge d'Affaires told Emboff and the head of the Swedish aid office that he considers it unlikely that the EU will send a delegation to the inauguration and that the EU countries will most likely be represented at the inauguration by their highest ranking diplomats in country. At the same reception, the German Charge told DCM that he doubted that even local European diplomats would attend.

LLORENS